



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ELIZABETH HEFFERNAN
SECRETARY

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services*

P.O. Box 1025 ~State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567-3100 Fax: (978) 567-3121

www.mass.gov/dfs



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

For Immediate Release: January 4, 2012
Contact: Peabody Fire Chief Steven Pasdon, (978) 531-3444
Jennifer Mieth, (DFS), (978) 567-3381

Peabody Fatal Fire Electrical

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, Peabody Fire Chief Steven Pasdon, Peabody Police Chief Robert L. Champagne, federal Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Special Agent in Charge, Boston Division, Guy Thomas and Essex District Attorney Jonathan W. Blodgett said their joint investigation has determined that the cause of the 5 Hancock Street fire was electrical. The fire occurred in a second floor apartment.

Peabody firefighter James Rice died while fighting the fire on December 23, 2011 in the 6-family building. Two residents of the second floor apartment where the fire started were treated for smoke inhalation; the other occupants escaped safely.

Joint Fire Investigation

The fire was jointly investigated by the Peabody Fire Department, Peabody Police Department, State Police fire investigators assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal, State Police assigned to Essex District Attorney Jonathan W. Blodgett's Office and the federal Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Assistance was received from the Code Compliance Unit of the Office of the State Fire Marshal, an electrical expert and State Police Crime Scene Services.

The Medical Examiner's Office has not yet released its final report on the cause of FF Rice's death. Final results sometimes take several weeks until all tests are completed. Although his cause of death is undetermined pending further testing, it is clear FF Rice died while fighting the fire. FF Rice was found and quickly rescued by firefighters from the second floor apartment.

Building Had Fire Alarm System but No Sprinklers

Neither the Peabody Fire Department nor Peabody Inspectional Service Department records indicate any outstanding code violations for the building. The building was equipped with a properly working fire alarm system, smoke alarms, heat detectors and carbon monoxide alarms.

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It was not equipped with residential sprinklers, which were not required when the building as built, but would be if it were built today.

2nd Firefighter Line of Duty Death in December

This was the second line of duty firefighter death this month in Massachusetts. Worcester Firefighter Jon Davies died fighting a residential structure fire on December 8, 2011.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducts a review of every firefighter line of duty death to see if there are lessons that can be learned to improve workplace safety.